

International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC)

The ISC was established in 1995 through an intergovernmental agreement between the governments of Japan and the United States. Since then, it has undergone a number of changes including a name change in 2005 from “Interim Scientific Committee” to the current “International Scientific Committee” and to membership qualifications. Membership is open to coastal states and fishing entities that border the region or that have vessels fishing for tuna and tuna-like species in the region, and to relevant intergovernmental fishery or marine science organizations. Current members of the ISC are Canada, China, Chinese-Taipei, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and the United States. Non-voting members are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the North Pacific Science Organization (PICES) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

The purpose of the ISC is to enhance scientific research and cooperation for conservation and rational utilization of the species of tuna and tuna-like fisheries which inhabit the North Pacific Ocean and to establish the scientific groundwork for the conservation and rational utilization of these species in the region. The Committee is organized into five Working Groups – Statistics, Pacific Bluefin Tuna, Albacore, Billfish, and Sharks -- that report to a Plenary body. Results of the ISC are made available to participating members and Highly Migratory Species Regional Fishery Management Organizations of the Pacific Ocean. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the ISC provides scientific support for the work of the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Highlights of the ISC14 Plenary Meeting

The 14th ISC Plenary, held in Taipei, Chinese-Taipei from 16-21 July 2014 was attended by members from Canada, Chinese Taipei, Japan, Korea, and the United States as well as the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Management Commission and the North Pacific Marine Science Organization. The Plenary reviewed results, conclusions, new data and updated analyses of the Billfish, Albacore, Shark and Pacific Bluefin tuna working groups. The Plenary endorsed the findings that the North Pacific albacore tuna, North Pacific blue shark, Western Central North Pacific swordfish stocks are not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, and that the Eastern Pacific Ocean swordfish stock is not overfished but likely experiencing overfishing. It re-iterated that the Pacific bluefin tuna and striped marlin stocks are overfished and experiencing overfishing, and that the Pacific blue marlin stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. It further provided information on biological reference points for North Pacific albacore tuna and the probability of achieving specific biomass levels, the range of historic recruitment as well as catch and effort data tables for Pacific bluefin tuna for managers to consider in crafting management measures.

A special seminar on the impacts of climate change on fish and fisheries was held. Plenary discussed formalizing the ISC structure and administration and will continue researching means of doing both. Plenary also noted the strides WGs had made in incorporating best available scientific information (BASI) into stock assessment work, enhanced stock assessment reports and the increased transparency in Working Group efforts. Observers from Pew Charitable Trust, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation and World Wildlife Fund attended. The ISC workplan for 2014-2015 includes completing a new North Pacific striped marlin assessment and a first shortfin mako shark assessment, and enhancing database and website management. The Plenary re-elected Chi-Lu Sun for a second term as ISC Vice-Chair, the following working group Chairs: Suzanne Kohin for the Shark Working Group, Ren-Fen Wu for the Statistics Working Group, and Jon Brodziak for the Billfish Working Group. The next Plenary will be held in the United States in July 2015.

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